

# **The Measurement of Students' Intercultural Sensitivity: Reflections from a Mixed Methods Correlational and Qualitative Research**

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## **Abstract**

The complexity of human relations more clearly emerges between people of different cultures, often involved in misunderstandings or even conflicts. It is necessary to dedicate pedagogical attention, plans and policies to improving intercultural relations supported by scientific research. In order to have positive intercultural relations, a fundamental element turns out to be intercultural sensitivity, according to the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) by M. Bennett. The assessment of intercultural sensitivity is a fundamental step in understanding how to direct educational practices even if it is complex to realise. This proposal is part of an ongoing doctoral research, a multivariate correlational and qualitative study with integrated sequential mixed methods. The research explores intercultural sensitivity and its correlations in a non-probabilistic reasoned convenience sample of students (N:137) in Italian secondary schools. Not having found an accessible validate tool using the DMIS and suited for the context, this study has implemented a new tool, the intercultural sensitivity questionnaire for Italian schools (ISQIS). Discussion groups with students (N:80) will enrich the quantitative data and a questionnaire for one teacher in each class (N:7), about context information, was implemented. Reliability and exploratory factor analysis demonstrate the validity of the instrument to measure two stages at the extremes of intercultural sensitivity, defense ( $\alpha$ :.755) and acceptance ( $\alpha$ :.605). Interesting results are found in the stages of minimization and reversal but with low reliability ( $\alpha$ :.545;  $\alpha$ :.532). It is considered essential to have quantitative data in educational research, even when there is a need to deepen it with qualitative data.

**Keywords:** intercultural pedagogy, DMIS, intercultural competence, secondary school; assessment